



DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 622

[Docket No. 120404257-3325-02]

RTID 0648-XB110

Fisheries of the Caribbean, Gulf of Mexico, and South Atlantic; 2021 Commercial Hook-and-Line Closure for South Atlantic Golden Tilefish

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Temporary rule; closure.

SUMMARY: NMFS implements an accountability measure for the commercial hook-and-line component of golden tilefish in the South Atlantic exclusive economic zone (EEZ). NMFS projects that commercial hook-and-line landings for golden tilefish will reach the commercial quota for the hook-and-line component by June 1, 2021. Therefore, NMFS closes the commercial hook-and-line component for golden tilefish in the South Atlantic EEZ on June 1, 2021. This closure is necessary to protect the golden tilefish resource.

DATES: This temporary rule is effective at 12:01 a.m., Eastern Time, on June 1, 2021, until 12:01 a.m., Eastern Time, on January 1, 2022.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mary Vara, NMFS Southeast Regional Office, telephone: 727-824-5305, email:

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SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The snapper-grouper fishery of the South Atlantic includes golden tilefish and is managed under the Fishery Management Plan for the Snapper-Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region (FMP). The FMP was prepared by the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council and NMFS, and is implemented by NMFS under the authority of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act) by regulations at 50 CFR part 622. All weights in this temporary rule are given in gutted weight.

The commercial sector for golden tilefish has two components, each with its own quota: The hook-and-line and longline components (50 CFR 622.190(a)(2)). The golden tilefish commercial annual catch limit (ACL) is allocated 25 percent to the hook-and-line component and 75 percent to the longline component. The total commercial ACL (equivalent to the commercial quota) for golden tilefish is 331,740 lb (150,475 kg), and the hook-and-line component ACL is 82,935 lb (37,619 kg).

Under 50 CFR 622.193(a)(1)(i), NMFS is required to close the commercial hook-and-line component for golden tilefish when its commercial ACL has been reached, or is projected to be reached, by filing such a notification with the Office of the Federal Register. NMFS has determined that the commercial ACL for the golden tilefish hook-and-

line component in the South Atlantic will be reached by June 1, 2021. Accordingly, the commercial hook-and-line component of South Atlantic golden tilefish is closed effective at 12:01 a.m., Eastern Time, on June 1, 2021.

The commercial longline component for South Atlantic golden tilefish also closed on March 31, 2021, and will remain closed for the remainder of the current fishing year, through December 31, 2021 (86 FR 14549; March 17, 2021). Therefore, because the commercial longline component is already closed, and NMFS is closing the commercial hook-and-line component through this temporary rule, all harvest of South Atlantic golden tilefish in the EEZ is limited to the recreational bag and possession limits specified in 50 CFR 622.187(b)(2)(iii) and (c)(1) as long as the recreational sector is open.

The operator of a vessel with a valid Federal commercial vessel permit for South Atlantic snapper-grouper having golden tilefish on board harvested by hook-and-line must have landed and bartered, traded, or sold such golden tilefish prior to 12:01 a.m., Eastern Time, on June 1, 2021. During the closure, the sale or purchase of golden tilefish taken from the EEZ is prohibited. The prohibition on sale or purchase does not apply to the sale or purchase of golden tilefish that were harvested by hook-and-line, landed ashore, and sold prior to 12:01 a.m., Eastern Time, on June 1, 2021, and were held in cold storage by a dealer

or processor. For a person on board a vessel for which a Federal commercial or charter vessel/headboat permit for the South Atlantic snapper-grouper fishery has been issued, the recreational bag and possession limits and the sale and purchase prohibitions during the commercial closure for golden tilefish apply regardless of whether the fish are harvested in state or Federal waters, as specified in 50 CFR 622.190(c)(1)(ii).

Classification

NMFS issues this action pursuant to section 305(d) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act. This action is required by 50 CFR 622.193(a)(1), which was issued pursuant to section 304(b) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act, and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

Pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 553(b)(B), there is good cause to waive prior notice and an opportunity for public comment on this action, as notice and comment is unnecessary and contrary to the public interest. Such procedures are unnecessary because the regulations associated with the commercial closure of the golden tilefish hook-and-line component have already been subject to notice and public comment, and all that remains is to notify the public of the closure. Such procedures are also contrary to the public interest because of the need to immediately implement the closure to protect the golden tilefish resource and minimize the risk of exceeding the sector's

ACL. Prior notice and opportunity for public comment would require time and would result in exceeding the sector's ACL.

For the aforementioned reasons, the Acting Assistant Administrator also finds good cause to waive the 30-day delay in the effectiveness of this action under 5 U.S.C. 553(d) (3) .

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*

Dated: May 26, 2021.

Jennifer M. Wallace,
Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries,
National Marine Fisheries Service.

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